MONTHLY BULLETIN
PENNSYLVANIA·DEPARTMENT·OF·WELFARE

Vol. II, No. 5 HARRISBURG, PA. SEPTEMBER, 1933

BEHIND THE SCENES

WITH its family of nine million sons and daughters, Pennsylvania's Welfare Department is constantly appealed to for every sort of service. Today, it is swaddling clothes for a fatherless infant. Tomorrow it is a shroud for a friendless vagabond.

In providing for various needs, the Department administers 28 State-owned and over 200 State-aided institutions. More than 110,000 Pennsylvanians are sheltered within these institutions today and will sleep under their roofs tonight. Last year, some 700,000 men, women, and children were under their care for long or short stays.

A city of 100,000 with an annual transient population of six times its size involves large problems of administration. The Department's degree of responsibility varies. The State-aided institutions belong to various groups, nonsectarian, philanthropic and civic, fraternal orders, private citizens. Having established the need for their service, they are granted a subsidy, subject to State inspection and supervision.

For the group in State-owned institutions, the State assumes entire responsibility. They include the dependent, delinquent and defective and number about 27,000 at any one time. Last year more than 90,000 passed through the doors of these State-owned institutions. Of the total appropriation of 36 millions to the Department of Welfare, over half, 19 million is allocated to this group.

To take the place of Mayor, board of aldermen and other functionaries for this community, the department has combined its various types of institutional service into a Bureau of Institutional Management. Mr. R. Bruce Dunlap, Director of the Bureau, is in close touch with the personnel and problems of the State institutions through his six years of service as Agriculturist. His staff includes: Miss K. Frances Cleave, Nursing Consultant; Miss Florence Peters, Nutrition Consultant; Mr. Calvin Hunter, Architect.

Institution is a grim sort of word. It suggests impersonality and disinfectants. Some institutions are sad and dreary places. It is surprising however to find how much shade and color of human personality may be reflected within institution walls. Some institutional problems have plenty of what the newspaper men call human interest. After all, these institutions are filled with human beings.

There's a motley crew of emergencies to meet, and the Director must sometimes sympathize with the old woman who lived in a shoe. What to do when the ovens that ordinarily turn out bread for 2500 men suddenly go out of condition?—when all the cows in a dairy turn up their noses at a newly purchased order of feed?—when a laundry scheduled to run full time must be closed down for repairs?

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ENTRANCES AND EXITS

By Margaret M. Swiggard

(Miss Swiggard, an experienced worker in the Department's Bureau of Children, as a member of the new Division of Family and Children's Work will in future inspect almshouses as well as orphanages.)

OF course we had known it was coming. We had heard it discussed, had taken part in the discussion; still the job was new and gave us pause.

How to transfer our thinking from needs of childhood to those of old age, from building the beginnings of life to salvaging wreckage at the end, from children's homes to Almshouses.

Almshouses! The word grated. We preferred a world that did not need such things. Still, there they were with minimum wages and old age pensions in the distant future.

We had to begin somewhere. We chose a county where the Almshouse management was said to be good, the Superintendent competent and kindly. We went through buildings first. Miles of orphanages had made that process familiar enough. Questions clicked into place as we walked. Bed space—fire hazard—living or rest rooms—books—recreation—place for personal belongings—individual toilet articles. Odd how similar the needs of human beings living together, be they seven or seventy.

The Superintendent obligingly gave information. We looked down the long rows of neat white beds in the men's dormitories. On the iron frame work of each bed hung a typewritten card, bearing the man's name. Each name was different. It was the only trace of individuality in the room. No locker or box for personal belongings, no table, not even a shelf. This room was home for seventy men. A home stripped down to a bed where they might stretch their limbs at night. At the head of each bed a chair for the coat and trousers worn during the day. They sleep in their underclothes.

We suggested that for the sake of morale each man needed a few inches of cubic space that he could shut away from the world and call his own. The superintendent shook his head with a patient smile—he reminded us that old people are like squirrels in their hoarding instinct. Give them a box and they fill it with dirty rags, bits of decaying food, lumps of butter which melt and turn rancid. No, it was impossible to keep the place free from mice and vermin if they allowed untidy, smelly hoards under each man's bed.

As a special concession, a touch of ghostly chivalry, each old woman was allowed some sort of box, perhaps half the size of a cardboard shoe box. But they must be opened and inspected regularly and perishable articles removed. Once more, the individual against the group. One travels light when the almshouse is the end of the road.

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EDITORIAL

By Alice F. Liveright, Secretary of Welfare

THE Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has an enviable record in the field of grants to widows' families. The program established in Pennsylvania is considered sound.

A State appropriation matched by an equal amount from the County with an allowance of 10% for administration is the basis of the budget plan. Volunteer boards serving in each county with trained staff members provide a balanced set-up for service to families. The central supervisory staff controls and advises boards and staff members. Fifty-five counties are now operating under M. A. F. grants.

These families are an asset to the community. They receive cash for their monthly expenses. Rents, grocery bills, heat, light—are promptly paid for. The counties' money is promptly returned to the taxpayers of the district and the mother has the satisfaction of being the worthy custodian of her children, as well as guardian of the family funds. This makes for self respect both for mother and children and the small number of delinquencies in the M. A. F. families testifies to the value of good home environment.

Such excellent standards should likewise extend to Poor Relief in all counties of Pennsylvania. In the past, even with a comparatively small number of families such was not the case!

I shudder to think of the future when the burden of poor boards and local relief will increase with the decrease of Federal or State funds for unemployment relief.

Every citizen in Pennsylvania should be concerned with a good welfare program. He owes it to his own self-repect and to pride in his community to determine that poor relief shall in the future be as dignified, as adequate and as well administered as Mothers' Assistance.

Dr. Paul Holmer, recently appointed psychiatrist to the Bureau of Mental Health, has taken up his new work with the Department. Dr. Holmer has had State Hospital experience. Prior to his appointment to the Bureau of Mental Health he held a Commonwealth Fund fellowship, and was connected with the Philadelphia Child Guidance Clinic. Dr. Holmer will be primarily active in advancing the work of the State-wide mental clinic program.

ENTRANCES AND EXITS

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Recreation facilities? They just sat, the men out on the grass, some smoking, a few listlessly playing cards. All the women were indoors lined up around the walls of a bare room, gazing blankly at the row of women against the opposite wall.

Why not encourage them to do things that would interest and amuse them? These people, we were told had never learned to play, had never had time for hobbies. And now they had no purpose, no ambition. Even for sewing or knitting one must have some incentive. At least, we urged, let the women be out in the sunshine too. But they prefer to stay inside. They belong to a generation when females stayed indoors! they had spent their lives in their kitchens. They did not feel at home outdoors, did not know what to do.

Here and there individuals stood out. They were not just a group of old folks; they were people. The old lady with beautiful white hair making rugs to give away; the only woman in the place who preferred to be doing something; did she find happiness in her work? Was there no other place for her—with children, with relatives? The little old man so confident he was going home. Who did he dream was coming for him? Beyond food, shelter, clean clothes—what were their thoughts, their desires, their needs, these old people?

Astonishingly we were asking the same things we ask about children. What was their relationship with the Superintendent?—with their own people?—what were their contacts with the outside world? Where did they come from? How? Why?

Back in the Superintendent's office we approached the problem from another angle. What was this county's outdoor relief program? Did they try to keep old couples together in their homes? What did the Poor Directors do about indigent families? Did they pay rent, furnish fuel and clothing? Did they give cash or merely food orders?

No cash, no rents, no fuel, no clothing! Then how could homes be kept together? How about the children? We knew that the county's bill for care of dependent children was very high. Could not some of that money be better spent in keeping homes together? Could not more human happiness be bought with the money that is spent?

Here we are again, facing the same considerations we always reached in discussing the children's problem. Somehow, we saw dimly, it's a circle, the beginning and end touching until there is no beginning and end.

The problem of a county's relief giving begins with preserving the values of human ties and relationships. The next step is humbly to try to understand so that we may give, not our own vision of beautiful grounds and buildings, but to each his own chosen place in the sun. Ultimately it costs less in money but it calls for intelligence and understanding. That is why our first recommendation is not for more or better grounds and equipment but for a social worker able to plan for each individual with understanding.

TRAINING COURSE ENDS

By Helen D. Pigeon, Field Representative, Bureau of Corrections, Department of Welfare

AS everyone expected, Pennsylvania State College proved an ideal spot for the summer course on Emergency Relief which was jointly sponsored by the Department of Welfare and the State Emergency Relief Board. Naturally the rural phases of the work were emphasized and through its staff and its facilities the college offered some rare opportunities for study and practice. For the field work Centre County does not provide the complexities and resources of an urban organization. Under careful supervision however, it was possible to give the students the fundamentals of a sound investigation and case analysis, and to develop their initiative in tapping the more intangible resources of rural life. The long afternoons spent on the mountain sides and the helpful spirit of the directors and staff of the Centre County Emergency Relief Board gave something of a holiday spirit to the whole experience.

From the academic side the students will never forget the richness of personality and of information which the list of speakers brought to them. They covered all phases of the relief problem: organization, finance, family and individual needs, the use of social resources, work relief and a score of other topics.

The speakers included: Mrs. Alice F. Liveright, Mr. Eric Biddle, Mrs. Helen Glenn Tyson, Mr. F. Richard Stilwell, Mr. Robert Kelso, Mr. Thomas Devine, Mr. Edwin D. Solenberger, Mr. Joseph Beck, Miss Mary S. Labaree and others. The professors at State College also gave very generously of their time.

At the close of the course, in lieu of a commencement, an all-day conference was held at the Nittany Lion, with over 200 guests representing more than 20 counties. There were discussion groups on accounting, investigation and work relief. At the luncheon Mrs. Liveright and Mr. Pray sounded a valedictory note of fine service and constructive planning for the future.

The course was limited to 26 students. They represented counties from every section of the State: Lackawanna, Luzerne, Montour, Schuylkill, Delaware, Dauphin, Franklin, Centre, Clinton, Clearfield, Cambria, Somerset, Jefferson, Warren and Allegheny.

They were an unusually fine group. Almost without exception they had University backgrounds and several had taken advanced degrees in the social service. Five were graduates of schools of social work and 13 had had actual service, volunteer or paid, with a County Emergency Relief Board. Naturally they were in demand for immediate service. Before the course was finished more than half had been definitely placed and all the others were under consideration.

While this first course was somewhat experimental, those responsible for it feel that it has been eminently worth while. It has sent out a group of workers who have a sound point of view, sane technical skill and a desire to acquire the training and experience which makes a good professional worker. They will carry forth the message of fine service. Already the college is planning similar work for the coming year.

THE BOND ISSUE WHAT IT MEANS

By H. E. Bishop, Executive Secretary of the Hospital Association of Pennsylvania and Superintendent of the Robert Packer Hopital.

(At the municipal election in November, Pennsylvania citizens will either adopt or reject a proposed amendment to the State constitution authorizing a bond issue not exceeding $25,000,000, to defray expenses of the State government for the biennium beginning June first, 1933. Contingent upon adoption of this amendment rests approximately thirty per cent of the total subsidy granted by the Legislature as State-aid to 162 general hospitals and other institutions and $20,000,000 for unemployment relief after November.)

OUR Pennsylvania Legislature, in an honest effort to relieve the present unemployment situation, paved the way to secure the necessary funds that must be provided for the coming Winter by asking the people of Pennsylvania to approve a bond issue. As we all know this bond issue is to be voted on at the November, 1933 election and the fate of the issue is left in the hands of our citizens.

There is so much at stake in this vote that it is to be hoped our citizens will understand the need fully before the time comes to cast their ballots. In spite of the splendid pickup in business which we are witnessing, there are many signs that the coming Winter will be a tough one for those persons who have as yet been unable to secure work and for those dependent on them.

While the prime object of the bond issue is to supply the necessary funds to care for this army of unemployed, there are other needs equally as great that are dependent on the approval of the issue by our citizens. The very existence of many of our State-aided Hospitals depends on an affirmative vote to provide for the payment of a portion of the funds which were voted to these hospitals at the last session of the Legislature, but which are dependent on approval of the bond issue. If the bond issue is approved the amounts voted by the Legislature and approved by Governor Pinchot which are contingent on the approval of the people will be paid. When we consider that these contingent appropriations amount to nearly 30% of the total amounts appropriated, one can readily see the predicament the hospitals will be in unless the majority of our citizens vote "yes." Equally important also is the favorable approval to our State-aided educational institutions because a portion of their appropriation is likewise contingent on this approval.

It is incredible that the people of Pennsylvania should not meet this emergency and I am confident that we can depend on them to approve the bond issue. To our Commonwealth—second only in wealth to any in the United States—the amount of the bond issue, even though a large one, should not be regarded as too serious a burden to shoulder. Repayment of this loan under the improving conditions which we all cannot help but observe, will be comparatively easy of accomplishment, and we owe it to those in dire need to accept this responsibility. Vote "Yes" for the Bond Issue in the November election.

DEPARTMENT PUBLICATIONS

NATION-WIDE circulation has been conferred upon a Welfare Department pamphlet, "The A B C of Foster Family Care for Children" by the Federal Children's Bureau in Washington. It appears with a letter of transmittal to the Hon. Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor, from Miss Grace Abbott, Chief of the Children's Bureau.

The pamphlet was originally published by the Bureau of Children of the Pennsylvania Department of Welfare with the assistance of the Public Charities Association. They assembled a State-wide committee to determine certain basic principles of child placing. J. Prentice Murphy, executive secretary of the Children's Bureau of Philadelphia, was chairman of the committee and released a member of his staff, Mrs. Blanche Paget, who wrote the pamphlet. Its theme is that "separation of a child from his family should be a last resort....The child-placing agency should see itself in the light of a reserve to be called upon when all else fails."

Miss Mary S. Labaree, Assistant Director of the Bureau of Community Work, is the author of a recent pamphlet, "The County's Children." The Children's Aid Society of Pennsylvania had it printed for the Department. It is based on incidents furnished by children's workers throughout the State. It has met with a gratifying response and numerous leaders in children's work from outside as well as within the State have written to ask for copies.

The Division of Family and Children's Work also sponsors a series of five pamphlets, "Talks on Child Welfare," Miss Labaree is the author of three of them: "Welfare Work, Prevention or Cure," "Children in Need of Special Care" and "America's Physically Handicapped Children." Margaret M. Swiggard, Field Representative in the same Division, writes on "Juvenile Delinquency—What of it?" and Dr. William C. Sandy, Director of the Bureau of Mental Health, contributes "Building a Mental Health Program in a Community."

These pamphlets were prepared for the use of women's clubs and other community groups in planning various types of welfare programs. One of them, "Welfare Work, Prevention or Cure" has been reprinted in the "Pennsylvania Club Woman," the magazine published by the State Federation of Pennsylvania Women.

The Division of Research and Statistics has made a statistical study of 1931 commitments to penal institutions for adult male delinquents in the State. This includes Eastern and Western Penitentiaries and Huntingdon Reformatory. The study, "The Man Behind the Crime" includes general population tables showing commitments, offenses and sentences by counties, and discharges. It also gives a number of tables dealing with the personal history of the prisoners, such as, offenses by age, race, nativity; nativity of father; religion; education; Intelligence Quotients; marital condition and occupation. A final section deals with Recidivists, giving offenses, ages, race, nativity and number of commitments. This study is available in mimeographed form. Write in to the Department for copies of any of the pamphlets mentioned above.

BEHIND THE SCENES

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There's the color and cut of the uniforms worn by student nurses in the training schools of the State's medical and surgical hospitals. Formerly each hospital had a different uniform. They will retain their distinctive styles of white caps but hereafter as an economy measure all uniforms will be of blue chambray with sleeves cut short above the elbow and white cuffs, collars, and aprons. The gored skirt and plain broad apron bib are designed to permit of ironing by machine. Some of the old uniforms with full gathered skirts had to be ironed by hand.

There are the institution cows, special pride of the Agriculturist. Thirty-five Holsteins on State institution farms have produced over 100,000 pounds of milk each during their lives. The champion of them all is 16-year-old Jannek Pontiac Netherland-good, Dutch name. She has produced 100 times her weight in milk and may be addressed Dairy Barns, Polk State School.

And there's the matter of garbage which is more interesting than might appear at first glance. Scientists describe an ancient civilization from digging up broken pots and kitchen middens. Dietitians can tell almost as much about an institution from its garbage. The Nutrition Consultant has sent out a series of questionnaires on the subject.

Observing the kinds of food most frequently found in the garbage they decide whether the waste is due to: (a), poor cooking; (b), serving too large portions; (c), distaste for that particular food. And then they do something about it.

One questionnaire states in answer to a question "Yes, where waste appears, method of preparation is changed, smaller servings are given or some foods are cut out entirely."

We are likely to think of prisons as places where men eat what they are given. It runs across preconceived notions of hard-boiled discipline to find stewards of our penitentiaries studying the appetites of their men—within the limitations of the low per capita cost possible under the appropriations.

We find in the Eastern Penitentiary questionnaire for instance, that when bologna was served cold there was waste, but when the bologna was fried it was all eaten. At another time, they found excessive waste of macaroni. By substituting spaghetti with tomato sauce, the waste was eliminated.

At Norristown (Mental Hospital) they have cut down the waste so successfully that the farmer complains that he does not have enough to feed the pigs!

Miss Helen D. Pigeon began her services September first as probation agent in the Bureau of Corrections. Miss Pigeon will contact probation officers in the various communities of the Commonwealth and assist in building probation service where this does not now exist. The new worker comes with a background of varied social experience. She has been connected with the American Red Cross in community service; the National Policewomen's Association and has aided in organizing probation services in several counties of Massachusetts. Miss Pigeon was appointed to the Bureau of Corrections from Lackawanna County.